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REVIEW OF THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY IN CARTOGRAPHIC DATA ACQUISITION, MANIPULATION, STORAGE AND PRESENTATION, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: THEMATIC MAPPING OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

The cartography of Cuba and the environment: achievements and prospects on the threshold of new technologies

Paper submitted by Cuba**

Summary

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The Institute of Tropical Geography, under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, was created in 1962. The Department of Cartographic Modelling and Geographic Information Systems was charged with the cartographic aspects of the Institute's research, but has also engaged in theoretical study of the methods of representation used in the various cartographic projects carried out by the Institute. Initially, as the Department of Cartography, and until the 1970s, its tasks included the drawing up of relief maps of the entire national territory on the 1:50,000, 1:250,000 and 1:1,000,000 scales.

Scientific work begun in 1965 led to the creation of the Atlas Nacional de Cuba, produced by the Institutes of Geography of Cuba and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where it was published.

In 1979, jointly with the Department of Regional Development and with advisory help from the University of Warsaw, the Institute produced the Atlas Socioeconómico del Caribe, a work which contributes to the necessary awareness of Cuba's Caribbean identity and foreshadows a possible integration of the region.

During the 1980s, the idea was raised of producing a new national atlas. Cuba's territory was already well known from the geographical point of view at that time, and statistics on the country had been systematically compiled. Numerous organizations and institutions took part, contributing research of various types, and in 1985, work began on the creation of the Nuevo Atlas Nacional de Cuba (NANC).

On the basis of this atlas, other scientific or popular science books on complex cartography were produced, and the Department changed its objectives, broadening its field of research at the theoretical level (cartographic modelling of the natural environment) and at the technological level (geographic information systems). Efforts to keep the contents of the NANC constantly updated gave rise in due course to the Cuban Geographic Information System, which placed Cuba in the forefront of cartography.

In addition to its initial objectives related to the updating of the NANC, this software package has been used in many applications relating to the country's economy, and has given the Department access to modern technology in the field of geographical information systems.